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ABSTRACT

The Center of Research for Education of Adults (CREA) in Spain is working to overcome the constrictions of adult education theories through three orientations: it works in a horizontal and communicative way, it attempts to correct common misunderstandings, and its main focus is to develop a new critical theory for adult education. Research projects have focused on adult education participation, basic capacities of adult population, numeracy in the workplace, and communicative capacities and social development. Other activities include the following: communicative elaboration in laws of adult education, support for popular movements of adult education, development of critical theories of adult education, promotion of communities of learning, and development of communicative pluricultural perspectives. CREA also constructs models or schemes on why some adults participate and others do not and on methodology of research on adult education participation. In recent research on participation, CREA has combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies and created a critical communicative approach for research of the issue of adult education participation through the use of daily life stories and case studies. (Contains 26 references.) (YLB)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CENTER OF RESEARCH FOR EDUCATION OF ADULTS (CREA): SOME CRUCIAL ISSUES

(Paper elaborated by CREA[1])

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1.- FROM ANDRAGOGICAL GHETTO TO COMMUNICATIVE THEORY AND PRACTICE

CREA tries to make a contribution to the overcoming of the following constrictions of the AE theories:

a) The Adult Education (AE) theories place themselves in the third level of the following model. Findings in social sciences (first level) are applied to education (second level) some years later, and then to AE (third level). Most AE scholars publish their writings only in specific adult education journals and almost never in the most prestigious journals of education or social science in their countries. Members of educational and social scientifical communities (as those adult educators quote) just do not know AE theories, authors and journals.

b) Most applications of theories in social sciences to AE are made from secondary literature. Many theoreticians of AE talk and write about Habermas' theory of Communicative Action or Foucault's conception of power without having ever read the main works of those authors.

c) The very weak theoretical foundations presently called theory of AE, leads to ground the present explosion of participation in AE. It helps the conservative project of delaying the fall down of the present andragogical ghetto, but not to the creative project of developing AE which enables to confront the cultural inequalities of current information society.

In order to contribute to overcoming of such constrictions, CREA works in the following orientations:

a) We work in a horizontal and communicative way. We are members of diverse scientifical communities having AE as our main focus of research. Theories of AE are part of the theories for education and of the theories for social sciences. Findings from our research are introduced to educational and social science communities.

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b) We are attempting to correct common misunderstandings, for example, the assumed opposition between instrumental and communicative learning or the misconceived idea that Foucault is against power. We are doing this through examining the detailed analyses on the original literature of the authors and theories we use.

c) Our main focus is to develop a new critical theory for adult education, which ensures to confront the present information society. This theory is being constructed by many researchers from diverse disciplines (adult educators, sociologists, pedagogists, psychologists, etc.) , social movements activists, as well as practitioners and participants in AE. All of us are collaborating together.

2.- SOME RESEARCHES

2.1.- Adult Education Participation

We have developed a research on AE participation and nonparticipation using quantitative and qualitative methodology such as survey, gatherings, life stories, case studies and contrasts.

The survey has been based on a similar questionnaire which has passed by a number of countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden. We outlined two results: a) the good side is the incredible explosion of participation in AE in all the countries; b) the bad side is its unequal distribution. Those who already have attained higher schooling and social positions tend to participate in AE.

Instead of arriving to such apparent conclusions as the low participation of those who have attained lower schooling comes from their lack of motivation to participate, we have looked at the real causes of non-participation, listening to and communicatively interpreting the voices of actors. For the reasons of their lack of participation, contrastingly, lack of time is known to be the reason in survey, inadequacy of timetables is found in interviews, and little access to have information about classes because most course-related information are sent to the people who have attended classes before, are considered to be the main reasons gathered. In life-stories, they have pointed out the positive reputation of attending a master and the negative one of going to literacy courses. In case studies we have found what have made some projects to attract more participation from nonparticipants.

This research has been sponsored by UIE (Hamburg's Unesco Institute of Education), Governments of Catalonia and Galicia and CIDE (belonging to the Governments of Spain).

2.2.- Basic capacities of adult population

Given the well known relative correlation of levels of schooling with functional competencies in daily life, the OECD is promoting a new leveling levels of literacy. This leveling is made with the answers to a questionnaire.

CREA is working on that issue differently. Besides a questionnaire of this kind, we are using qualitative methodologies of research in order to understand and analyze not only people's performance pattern but also their daily life situations. The results to the items of our survey are quite similar to those of the OECD in different countries. But, with qualitative research we have found other interesting conclusions:

- Leveling based on the score of surveys should not be trusted extensively. Especially, levels of schooling in respect to the capacities in daily life situation cannot be analyzed based on survey.

- Leveling can be a negative factor in fostering learning because it discourages those who classified as inferior levels and the governmental and nongovernmental agencies in raising attention to these people.

Qualitative research demonstrated that people's capacities in daily life situations are not taken into account by any of those levelings. Adult Education should take more grounds on those capacities than on the deficits 'founded' on surveys.

This research has been sponsored by UIE (Hamburg's Unesco Institute of Education), Governments of Catalonia and Canary Islands and CIDE (belonging to the Government of Spain).

2.3.- Numeracy at the workplace

A common assumption from the eighties is that those workers up to forty five years old are not considered to be retrainable and to be under the compulsory level of schooling. When a technological innovation was introduced in the company, they were put aside from the workplace.

We created two instruments, grounded on communicative perspective (using works by authors like Habermas) and on cultural perspective. The first one was the ANAT (analysis of the learning needs in the workplace). The second one was the ACOT (analysis of competencies of workers). Applying the second instrument to manual workers, we found they have different numeric competencies we could not grasp through traditional tests. For instance, those workers who could not make an addition with the schooled logic, could make multiplications with the practical logic of calculations with coins. Such cultural competencies were able to ground the learning needs outlined by the ANAT.

This research was supported by Task Force (from European Union) and developed in a joint project between SVE (Netherlands), SCEC (Scotland) and CREA.

2.4.- Communicative capacities and social development

Our researchers have emphasized concerns towards communicative capacities. When a new technology is introduced in the company, the workers ask other persons how to use it, instead of exclusively reading the manual. When we introduce a new electrodomestic in our kitchen, most of us do not study the manual, but ask the installer the main instructions.

Communicative capacities are an important part of basic competencies. How they operate in present information society is the main research subject we are presently developing. Instead of traditional focus on the possibilities of new technologies to our daily life and the deficits of people to manipulate technologies, our concern is on the communicative capacities of people.

This research is supported by the DGICYT (General Direction for Scientifical and Technological Research of the Spanish Government).

2.5.- Unlevelling effect

In the late eighties, Spain did a rotation of 180° in the conception of adult basic education (ABE). We found the traditional compensatory understanding was grounded on several misunderstandings as the followings:

a) Problem of the past: Many adults needed literacy and adult basic education because they did not complete their compulsory education when they were children.

b) Young people will not have this problem in the future because of the present growth and improvement of the school system.

The consequence of this misunderstandings has led to the reluctance of the society to have

interest in ABE.

Our research demonstrated:

a) One of main traits of present society is the increasing relevance of cultural background in all areas of social life: workplace, social life, understanding media messages, etc. The concept of literacy and ABE, as well as the concept of poverty, is not stable, but relative to the need of educational background in order to live in a particular society and time.

b) The current pattern of educational growth increases with the lack of basic education in the adult population. Because the educational growth is mostly oriented to young people, educational background of the adult population is unlevelling.

3.- OTHER ACTIVITIES

3.1.- Communicative elaboration in Laws of AE

The research about the unlevelling effect had an incredible impact on the theories and practices of AE. For two centuries of AE history, we had no law concerning AE in Spain. Now we have already four laws and others are in process. Besides, the present General Law of Education of Spain dedicates a whole title to AE.

CREA has participated in this legal development. For instance, in the last development, our center received the demand from the government of Community of Valencia in order to elaborate the project of law. We did it in collaboration with social movements activists. The associations of participants of AE have made the key contribution. It was necessary to change one of the main proposals of the movement. We went to a general assembly and no one was against the change. Participants demonstrated how mature people could be in assemblies when they are not cheated with perlocutionary effects. The law was approved by the Parliament of the Community of Valencia.

3.2.- Support to popular movements of AE

Most members of CREA directly participate in popular projects of AE. In fact, communicative perspective of CREA comes from the interaction between communicative experiences of AE and communicative social theories. The team of CREA has participated in the foundation of FAEA (Spanish Federation of Associations of Adult Education), Grupo 90 (Spanish Association of Professors of AE, member of FAEA) and in FACEPA (Federation of Associations of Participants in AE).

CREA learns through popular movements and these learning contribute to expanding the scientifical community. On the other way around, the center makes contributions to popular movements through the learning it takes from the scientifical community. Both sides are working in an horizontal communication, without a border between theory and practice.

3.3.- Development of critical theories of adult education

We reject the idea that educational theories should be the application of social theories and that theories of AE should be the application of theories of education. We understand theories of AE as theories of education and theories of education as social theories.

We consider our elaboration of theories of adult education as part of the elaboration of social theories. So, they are elaborated in close connection with in depth reading and dialogue

with the most recent and important theories of education and social sciences.

That makes our theories influential to the wide field of education and social sciences. For instance, we have elaborated what is presently the most influential work of critical pedagogy not only in AE, but also in the general field of education (Ayuste, 1994).

3.4.- Promotion of Communities of Learning

The communicative projects of AE we have supported, transform communities into learning communities. People developing learning interactions, transform their lives and their social relationships, including the urbanistic landscapes of their areas.

The school system is generating a dramatic failure in poor communities. Currently, we are extending learning communities to the school system with some of the actuations which have been developed till now in adult centers, like participation of the community in the students learning inside the classrooms. In the elaboration of such a process, it has been very important for the reference of an excellent movement developed by Levin (1988) in the US: the accelerated schools.

3.5.- Development of communicative pluricultural perspectives

Racism and Nazism are dramatically rising in Europe. Because information society reduces the offer of working hours, there is a competency for them. Many Europeans think that immigrants are stealing jobs from Europeans. And they react to their anger or frustration by supporting Nazi alternatives.

Besides researching on pluricultural education (as many other groups), we are studying the theoretical grounds of racism in European culture. It is alarming that with the rising of racism, intellectual fashion of the most prominent intellectual Nazis of the century (Heidegger) and his present followers (Foucault, Derrida) are also rising.

3.- INTERACTION BETWEEN THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL BACKGROUNDS

Our main concern is the interaction between the important theories and the best practices. We thoroughly read original literature of the most important contributions to social and educational sciences. The reading includes the discussion of the works page by page, relating them with our practices. In each research, we select the theoretical elements we are going to use from some authors, theories and works. We construct a theoretical/practical debate along with the research. In order to facilitate this communicative process, we have built material like the following schemes[2], from our recent research on participation:

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[2]This is one selection of the 7 schemes we used in that research. The others included the following authors: Austin (1962), Berger (1966), Bernstein (1990), Bourdieu (1979), Giroux (1992), Goffman (1959), Gorz (1983), Mead (1934), Searle (1969) and Willis (1990).

SCHEME 1-WHY SOME ADULTS PARTICIPATE AND SOME OTHERS DON'T? PRESENT SOCIETY, CULTURE, EDUCATION AND LEARNING WHERE PARTICIPATION / HOW PARTICIPATION ARE HAPPENING (1)

THEORY/AUTHOR/BIBLIOGRAPHY	CONTRIBUTION TO STUDY ON PARTICIPATION	APPLICATION TO OUR STUDY
T: Communicative Action A: HABERMAS B: Theory of Communicative Action	Instrumental and communicative rationalities. More than to knowledge and its acquisition. Rationality refers to the use of knowledge by subjects, In instrumental rationality, subjects do an instrumental use of knowledge in order to propose goals and to realize them in an objective world. In communicative rationality, knowledge is a communicative understanding.	Won participation is a consequence of a concept of knowledge as an instrument to get the goals of society, what in practice are the goals of the dominant sectors. When communities define knowledge as the understanding among their members, they get the cultural participation of traditional nonparticipants.
T: Structure Modernity Theory A: GIDDENS B: Modernity and Self-identity	Structures generate social practices(carried out by human agencies) and these practices at the same time generate structures. Transformative capacity of actors. Politics of life. Discursive/practical conscience: what actors know about the conditions of their own actions and can verbalize or cannot.	Participation are transformation are both sides of the same coin. On the one hand, participation of traditional nonparticipants are generates transformation of their lives (may be not structural changes but transformation of way of life, of the closer social context). On the other hand, only the transformation of dominant conceptions and structures can get the participation of those people. Only some qualitative methodologies approach practical consciousness. All quantitative and some qualitative methodologies only reach their discursive consciousness, what is only the iceberg of their knowledge.
T: Matthew Effect A: MERTON B:Sociology of science	Recognition in knowledge gives more to those having more and gives less to those having less. Rewards system determines development of knowledge and its recognition.	Current dominant evaluation of knowledge gives more to those having more and less to those having less; then, it is increasing cultural inequalities. Only the transformation of that current dominant evaluation could promote decreasing of cultural inequalities. Evaluation system is a cultural reward system. If it places people in a scale of hierarchic levels, such classification increases inequalities between those levels.

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SCHEME 2-WHY SOME ADULTS PARTICIPATE AND SOME OTHERS DON'T? PRESENT SOCIETY WHERE PARTICIPATION / HOW PARTICIPATION ARE HAPPENING (1)

THEORY/AUTHOR/BIBLIOGRAPHY	CONTRIBUTION TO STUDY ON PARTICIPATION	APPLICATION TO OUR STUDY
T: Information Society A: CASTELLS B: Nuevas perspectives critican on education.	Transformation from industrial to information society are is moving the key relevance form material resources towards process of information.	Present explosion of AEP we are finding in our researchers (and many actors have been discovering before) is a result of such new relevance of all activities (like AE) that contribute to the selection and process of information.
T: Crisis of work Society A: DFFE B: Crisis of Work Society	Keynesian model of "full employment", through growth, is not possible anymore, if we understand such "full employment" as everyone having traditional jobs. The solution is the distribution of the disponible working hours among all workers and, so, the reduction of the labor day.	Current increasing concentration of training on privileged workers, excluding the other people from AE is in consciously grounded on the wrong idea of the possibility of a illimited growth controlled for a minority of the humanity. Distribution of working hours requires to focus AE among all people, instead of excluding the majority of the population.
T: Generative linguistics A: CHOMSKY B: Language and politics	Difference between competence and actuation (instead of between Language and parole). So, there is an agent as intermediate element. Such agent has a creativity governed by rules. Dominant language creates distortions of communication and information in order to reinforce social exclusion. The solution is not the impossible access of social excluded people to dominant language, but the transformation of that dominant language.	Agents have competence to act differently to what they do and to what other people do. Agents have potentiality to create cultural practices that have never exist till now. Social and cultural excluded people, traditional non participants, should not limit their perspectives to the access to the "superior levels" of knowledge, but to create new cultural practices able to overcome their exclusion.

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SCHEME 3-WHY SOME ADULTS PARTICIPATE AND SOME OTHERS DON'T? PRESENT SOCIETY HERE PARTICIPATION / HOW PARTICIPATION ARE HAPPENING (III)

THEORY/AUTHOR/BIBLIOGRAPHY	CONTRIBUTION TO STUDY ON PARTICIPATION	APPLICATION TO OUR STUDY
T: Cultural extension or communication	Extension of dominant culture, education and research is a form of exclusion of popular culture. Communication means not to extent our own knowledge and patterns to the others, but to dialogue with other perspectives and cultures in order to enrich one each other without loosing our respective identities or arranging them hierarchically as superior or inferior.	Lower classes need a participation grounded on cultural communication and not on cultural extension. AE oriented as cultural extension qualities them as inferior on culture, motivation, literacy and provokes their resistance and even their rejection.
A: FREIRE	There is not neutral education, educator or researcher. We are always taking sides for some social sectors, even (principally) if we think we are neutrals. If we try to colonize other countries and cultures, our superior power will get the support of some of their members and will provoke the division of their people and the destruction of their identities.	If we take sides for non privileged people, countries and cultures, we cannot place them on the bottom of a classification of levels of literacy or participation. They have already enough classifications (like their educational level) to project negative expectative to them.
B: Pedagogy of the Oppressed Pedagogy of the City	We should not contemplate situations as actors being objects and researchers being the subjects of knowledge. Both are subjects and knowledge comes form dialogue among all persons involved in the situation.	We should not make the same as the despotist enlightenment: "all for people without people", The study of participation in order to promote it should have a participatory dimension. Participants and not participants have a lot to say. We cannot make conclusions without hearing them.
T: Informal learning	Informal learning provides the same capacities as formal learning. Those capacities take form of different dexterities in different contexts. In some circumstances, the operations of the hand and of the head are functionally equivalent.	Traditional nonparticipants have the same capacities and motivation than frequent participants. Instead of trying to bring them to our dexterities and motivations or blaming them for lacking, we should learn the capacities and motivations they have and to ground on them cultural projects.
A: SCRINNER(Vigotsky/Luria)	We cannot measure capacities of people outside the "natural" context of their activities.	If we remove people from their contexts, we cannot grasp their capacities and motivations. The flaw is larger when people have lower educational levels, because those people have contexts and culture more different (not more inferior) to ours. In order to get that, we should share talks and activities with those people.
B: Need and Hand: An Action Approach to Thinking		

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SCHEME 4-METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH ON ADULT EDUCATION PARTICIPATION (1)

THEORY/AUTHOR/BIBLIOGRAPHY	CONTRIBUTION TO STUDY ON PARTICIPATION	APPLICATION TO OUR STUDY
T: Phenomenological sociology A: SCHULTZ B: Structures of life world.	If you see a person opening a door and you interpret he is entering home, may you are wrong because he is the locksmith. It is better to ask. Ideal types of researchers should be connected to tipifications of daily life of the actor's common sense. Subjective sense depends on the life experience and conscience. Participants give meaning to their own actions. We only can interpret reality asking participants their own interpretations.	People have typifications concerning to those social contexts that are possible spaces for cultural participation. Cultural typifications taken from the common sense contribute to the image of culture people have. We need to know about these interpretations of culture because they are the conditions for action (participation). If we create an image of culture that excludes sectors of people, those persons will have the image that is not for them and we can wrongly interpret that they are not Motivated.
T: Ethnomethodology A: GARFINKEL B: Studies in Ethnomethodology	Persons are not cultural dopes. Actors interpret their own daily experiences. Research about the practical actions based on the categories from the common sense (typifications) because social context is build by actors (as well as their actions depend on the context). Analysis of conversation to find: hided expectative, knowledge implicit, rules stablished from the common sense.	People interpret their own daily experiences through the common sense and act consequently: "Actors are not cultural idiots". Actors know what are the reasons that make them participate or not. Researchers interpretations are not superior to actors' (participants/non participants) ones. Researchers should talk and interact with participants. Participants should analyze their own answers.
T: Qualitative methods in sociology A: CICCOURIEL B: The social organization of Juvenile justice	Traditional quantitative research methods do not provide social actors interpretations. Need of qualitative ones. New research designs to overcome the bias of the objectivism of surveys and social topography.	We need to use qualitative methodologies, but not exactly the ones Ciccouriel and other authers (hecker) have developed. On the one hand, we have now new developments of social sciences in respect to the grounds of methodologies developed by Ciccouriel and others, On the other hand, AEP is a concrete field of studies and context of research.

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4.- METHODOLOGICAL

In order to explain our methodology in practice, we are going to explain how it worked in our recent research on participation.

4.1.- Combination quantitative and qualitative methodologies

Critical research in AEP has the intention of making contribution to the fight against cultural exclusion. Taking into account objective, subjective and social worlds, we are trying to collaborate with governments, social initiatives, professionals and participants who want to improve the field of AE.

Quantitative research based on theories of deficits have consequences of cultural exclusion. This positivist approach has been overcome by interpretative one with the introduction of qualitative methodologies. Research on participation in AE should not be restricted to quantitative surveys about who are participating or not; because what we want is to interpret reality and also to transform it, and for this there is a need for combination of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

This combination is the consequence of two considerations: on the one hand, giving priority to interpretation and choosing the best methodology in each case and, on the other hand, the present necessity of having the quantative data that characterize the social importance of cultural participation and nonparticipation.

Quantitative can give us a description of the context and structural conditions and, from a communicative critical approach, qualitative methodology contributes to do study of subjectivities and it gives information about intersubjective relations among individuals, as well as those motivations and deterrents they have.

In our AEP research we cannot have a quantitative survey as the unique source of data because we lose a rich part of information specially relevant for the subject.

Questionnaires in general are made with elaborated linguistic codes and from the language people use in the daily life. Many items of our questionnaire are created by researchers (by who have academical background). Therefore, what we get is not the actors' interpretations.

Persons with a schooling background have advantages when answering the questionnaire because they are more used to being in a test situation.

This kind of survey excludes information from functionally illiterate persons so it gives a partial description of reality of participation and non participation that excludes those people more suitable to engage AE.

For instance, when we only have quantitative data in research on participation and non-participation and we interpret them from theories of deficits, the conclusion happens to be: people with low schooling levels are not motivated to participate; so we should motivate them.

Through qualitative research, those who are lowerly schooled demonstrate to us how the programs offered exclude them from participation. Therefore, we can conclude that we need to make our programs more available to them.

In order to have a complete description of reality it is necessary to develop combined qualitative methodologies which depicts communicative situations of dialogue and which offers the interpretations of those commonly excluded culture.

4.2.- Critical communicative approach for research of the issue of AEP: gatherings, daily life stories and case studies.

A new orientation to qualitative research has been created by the four kinds of theoretical work: a) reviewing the most usual methodologies in qualitative research and the most representative literature in social sciences, b) reflecting on both activities from a study focused on those sectors of a culturally excluded population which consider these people as persons who are not 'cultural idiots', c) discovering that, in the new information society, we should look for the most determinant factors for cultural participation or non participation in people's daily life context, d) the permanent corroboration of researchers' ontological assumptions are not more complex than those that we impute to actors.

a) We found important differences among the most usual methodologies in qualitative research and the present literature in social sciences. Since Goffman developed the dramaturgic action or Garfinkel's the communicative one, there have been contributions like the Theory of Communicative Action of Habermas, the Structuration Theory of Giddens, the Scribner studies on Practical Intelligence and others that have given a new dimension to social sciences. They are the base of qualitative methodologies. Unfortunately, sometimes instead of taking the orientation towards the incorporation of these improvements there has been a tendency to confuse them with other statements like structuralists (or Lacanian psychoanalyst-structuralists) and poststructuralists ones which, on the one hand, are in contradiction with the ethnomethodological approach and, on the other hand they are already overcome by social sciences.

b) Social research is in permanent danger of instrumentalization of persons and of not taking into account that they are individuals who interpret and build their own lives. This danger increases with marginalized persons. Qualitative research has taken important steps in the consideration of these persons as actors who have interpretations of their situation and who are not 'cultural idiots'. However, in the usual methodological development itself there can be seen a deep presence of deficit theories which claim that these persons do not know how to build a debate. This methodological development must be replaced from concepts (like practical conscience and practical intelligence) that will not put deterrents to the consideration of individuals as actors, nor in the data contribution neither in their interpretations.

c) Actors in daily life in the present information society is slightly different from the one taken from implicit considerations in the usual qualitative research, specially when it is taken from perspectives, like the psychoanalytic-structuralist ones, based on institutions and social life typical of industrial society. Nowadays, in many settings, concerning cultural participation or non participation, social relations stabilized in markets, cafes, work places or community centers, are more determinant than school or family history. In fact, participation and non participation depend on those interpretations permanently build in daily life and the information about the past changes according to those interpretations.

d) Due to the hierarchical organization of research institutions, where equality is rejected with an aim of fighting towards categories, the permanent corroboration of researchers ontological assumptions are not more complex than those imputed to actors.

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